

when he (dreams) by pally (palliris)

Series: [do you feel it? \[8\]](#)

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Summary:

Steve knew Jonathan had the tendency to go for voyeuristic photos, but he just-

He never thought the teen would have any of him, and especially not any of Billy.

(Or the two of them, together.)

when he (dreams)

Author's Note:

UM yes. here. take it off my dirty hands. (am i being annoying by posting these once a day? i feel like its a good nanowrimo replacement since im too busy to keep up w that)

(ALSO STILL GOING STRONG, DAY EIGHT LMAO, thanks to everyone whos been commenting, lov yall!!!!)

+ if u havent figured it out by now and are reading these out of order, dont (i didnt expect to write this many, or really any of them at all- the first fic of this series was actually the threesome pairing and then i decided to switch it to harringrove 200 words in, and never looked back- so the fact that these all fall in one linear, somewhat cohesive story is astonishing)

Jonathan slides him a set a pictures one day, after school has let out and the two of them are waiting for Nancy to get out of the restroom. It's the first afternoon he's spent with them in a while, and it makes him feel nostalgic, in a way.

(Billy's stuck at home, taking care of a sick Max because his dad is *also* home, and there's not really much else Steve could do besides give him a quick peck on the cheek in between fourth and fifth period before his boy was hightailing it out of there.)

Steve looks at Jonathan, and aches. But not because of how he used to; now, all he can think about is how he'd rather be with Billy right now, instead of stuck thinking about would-be's and have-gone's. Though there is a little bit of comfort that can be derived with his time with them.

It's more so just the breathless memory of what he had wanted, now, rather than what he still wants. That image had been replaced quite a few months ago.

(Doesn't make the rejection hurt any less, not even a little bit.)

As it is *today*, though, Jonathan slides the pictures over the plastic lunch table. Doesn't make eye contact with Steve. Won't stop chewing the inside of his mouth. It's all really damn worrying, frankly, and Steve's just about to ask what this is all about when he looks down and sees the photos, lined up like some sick slideshow-

It's him and Billy. In multiple renditions, from far away and obviously taken from that one time he and Billy went and made snowmen, then stayed out all day with only each other for warmth. There's a stupid smile on his face in each of them, and he looks fucking smitten beyond belief. Splaying a hand over them and thumbing through to the last one, Steve picks it up.

Billy's shoving snow down his jacket and Steve looks surprised- he really shouldn't have been, because his partner's a fucking *cheat*- but there's an air to them that makes it all glow with teenage giddy and excitement. Joy, happiness, whatever the fuck Steve can think of.

"Can I keep this one?" Is all Steve can manage against the prickling fear that's rising in the pit of his stomach against the strange, homely feeling the pictures evoke in him. He doesn't ask about the nature of how the photos got into his possession, because he already knows the answer to that.

Jonathan doesn't answer him. Stays more silent than silent; doesn't even seem to breathe, but then he's exhaling abruptly, a short thing punctuated by the tightening of his features.

Then, all the tension seems to roll out of him like water.

"I'm sorry," Jonathan breathes out, rubbing his hair with his hand. "I just- I didn't *mean* to take them, you two were just-

"Yeah," Steve interrupts in a whisper, like if someone says it out loud, it'll be more real than it already is. There's a swell of worry that rushes over the back of his neck, making his hair prickle.

He places the photo back down with the rest, then looks around them. Nobody's left over in the cafeteria, and Steve doesn't know if that's better or worse than if there was someone here to see Steve combust internally.

Steve's mind feels blank. Like, he can't think and everything wants to fucking run; he has all the parts, but there's no one home to work the machine. He looks back at Jonathan.

The other teen is worrying the neck of his long-sleeved shirt, very obviously trying not to look at Steve. It's only after he's been staring at Jonathan for a few, long seconds that he looks back up.

There's a pause, and then Jonathan starts talking, tone doing that worried thing it does, saying, "Are you okay? Because there's, um-" and he pauses, but picks back up again. "Nancy and I can take care of it. If there's anything that needs, uh, taking care of."

And the day that Steve would want help from Jonathan Byers with something like this- disregarding the fact that he *doesn't* need any help- is the day he keels over and dies, because Steve *knows* how fucking uncomfortable this must be for the poor guy.

"It's fine," Steve says, and it really is. Well, not the pictures part, but the whole. Situation. Between him and Billy. That Byers felt he needed to take pictures of, and show to Steve, like that would help make his case-

"If it's really all good, then," Jonathan starts out slowly, like Steve might attack him at any second, "because I'm glad you're getting to move on. From Nancy."

From us, Jonathan doesn't say, because he *knows*, and in that moment Steve really, truly fucking hates Jonathan Byers. A bitterness crawls up his throat like a hoard of spiders, stabbing him as the climb up and up and up and out of him, but he's gotten better at stopping his words before they get out of his mouth, so he clamps down on what he wants to say and instead says what he *needs* to.

"Me too."

(And yeah, the fact that Jonathan won't even acknowledge what Steve had felt was the lowest fucking blow, even if he had already moved the *fuck* on long before he was given a chance to. Something, somewhere deep inside him, always knew that he wasn't for them. Wasn't supposed to be their forever girl, wasn't the one they would

come home to after some kick ass adventure, in the home and with the kids.)

One thing at a time, Steve thinks, and grimaces.

“They’re good pictures,” Steve starts, because he’s the bigger person now. Has to be, really. “Just. For future reference, it would be a lot safer for you if you didn’t take voyeur pictures anymore.”

Jonathan’s face goes red with embarrassment, and he tries to stutter out some sort of half-bitten apology Steve knows he actually will mean, because he’s still Jonathan Byers and as painful as ever, but he’s also still Steve Harrington so he nicks that bud on the head and picks up the photographs.

One by one, he tears them all into halves, then quarters, then into pieces that are too small and indiscernible to make out. It feels wrong to tear up his and Billy’s happy moments, but he stops when he gets to the last photo. Picks it up, and turns it his hands.

Ignoring the awkward silence between the two of them, Steve just sighs and lets himself give a small smile, softly. His face must look fond and dreamy- he had seen just what he looked like in those pictures, and *god* was it sort of fucking embarrassing- but he doesn’t actually care, so he places a small kiss to the front of the photograph.

Carefully placing the photo into his backpack with a softness he doesn’t usually possess, Steve gathers up the shredded pieces and cups them in both hands. There’s a trashcan near their sitting spot, so he gets up and throws it all away, down down down into the darkness until he can’t see it anymore and it’s all just-

Just a memory.

Just as he gets back to the table Nancy all but bursts into the room, and the awkward tension between them exits as she enters. She’s their girl, the one they’ll hold onto in the end; Jonathan in a more literal sense, now, and Steve in a faraway, hazy way.

“Is something wrong?” Nancy asks when Jonathan *still* won’t talk, and Steve just grabs his backpack and hauls it over his shoulder.

Flicks his hair out of his eyes, for good measure.

“Nothing, Nance; just Jonathan bein’ creepy as always,” Steve says with a laugh he doesn’t feel, and the three of them fall back into a line, Nancy in the middle and her boys on either side of her, constantly in her orbit and never out of place-

Except now one of the planets has abandoned their star, and there’s no more gravity holding them there except sheer will.

Steve’ll be here for them, just not in the way he once wanted. But he’s fine; really. Because Steve has Billy, and that’s worth more than anything else in his life combined.

(And if Steve shows the picture to Billy later and they both burn it behind Billy’s house, watching the smoke curl the edges and the wind pick up the ashy pieces that are all that remain of it, it’s perfect and they hold hands the whole time.)

They take another photo; much, much later- but it’s only been a week, and Steve holds Jonathan’s pilfered camera above their heads and when they develop it, they look exactly how he imagined them.

Radiant.